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Creation of a new A level in Social Analytics for Wales

Day 1 – Parallel I (11.30-12.00)

Q-Step is a £19.5 million programme designed to promote a step-change in quantitative social science training in the UK. Q-Step was developed as a strategic response to the shortage of quantitatively-skilled social science graduates. Stronger links between Higher Education Institutes and FE colleges/secondary schools will enable Pre University students to realise the value in applying for new and exciting undergraduate programmes, to be developed and delivered at the Q step centres. The resulting expertise and resources will be shared across the higher education sector through an accompanying support programme which will also forge links with schools and employers (Nuffield Foundation 2014).

The Q step Centre for Excellence in Quantitative Methods is based in the Cardiff School of Social Sciences (SOCSI). In the past four years the School has made significant investments to develop the quality of undergraduate skills in quantitative methods. This centre will consolidate and significantly develop this work and enable Cardiff to be a leading centre of quantitative pedagogy.

A major strand of the Cardiff Q step centre work will focus on the development of a new A' level in Social Analytics. This new advanced level course will encompass learning outcomes of statistical thinking and analysis to explain various social phenomena such as, for example, health inequalities, differential educational attainment and achievement and the role of religion in society. This new A' level course is scheduled to be launched in September 2016.

The development of an A' level qualification in Social Analytics will be in partnership with schools and colleges in South Wales, the Welsh Joint Education Committee and the Royal Statistical Society Centre for Statistical Education. Students who complete the new qualification will be encouraged to apply for the BSc Social Analytics in September 2018, although the new degree course will enrol its first cohort and launch in September 2015 at Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences. This new and innovative undergraduate programme will build upon and augment the content delivered throughout the A' level in Social Analytics.

On a national level, standards of numeracy in Wales are a cause for concern, with 51% of 16-19 year olds having numeracy skills that are at or below entry level (WG, 2011). These worrying levels place Wales at the bottom of countries within the UK, suggesting current initiatives are inadequate to address these poor levels of mathematical skills (Tanner and Jones, 2013). The development of an A' level in Social Analytics will aid in addressing the numeracy deficit in Wales, fostering the development of statistical thinking to tackle sociological problems that exist within society. It is hoped these initiatives and stakeholder collaboration within the Cardiff University Q step centre will help to address the deficit not only in quantitative social scientists within the UK, but will expand to tackle and ameliorate the poor numeracy standards identified within Wales.

References

Nuffield Foundation (2014). Available from: <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/q-step>. Accessed on: 14/04/2014.

Tanner, H., and Jones, S. (2013). Developing Mathematical Literacy in Welsh Secondary Schools. *University of Wales Journal of Education*; 16: 21-26.

WG (2011). Welsh Government – National Survey of Adult Skills. Available from: <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-andresearch/national-survey-adult-skills/?lang=en>. Accessed on: 14/04/2014.